

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS**

1. A method for forming a meltblown web, comprising:  
forming fibers by extruding a molten thermoplastic  
material through a plurality of channels in a die as molten  
5 filaments;

attenuating the molten filaments with a high velocity  
fluid stream to reduce the diameter of the filaments;

depositing the attenuated filaments on a collecting  
surface to form a web of randomly dispersed meltblown  
10 fibers;

heating at least a tip apex portion of the die defining  
outlets at the ends of the channels through which the  
thermoplastic material is extruded with a heating element  
disposed relative to the tip apex portion; and

15 maintaining the tip portion at a temperature sufficient  
to keep the thermoplastic material in a desired molten state  
primarily with the heating element so that the attenuating  
air may be maintained at a temperature below the melting  
point of the thermoplastic material.

2. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the  
die tip apex portion with an infrared lamp.

3. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the  
die tip apex portion with electric cartridge heaters.

4. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the  
die tip apex portion with electrical current directed  
through the die.

5. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the die tip apex portion with a heated fluid conducted through at least one passageway defined through the die.

6. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the die tip apex portion directly with a heating element contained in or on the die.

7. The method as in claim 1, comprising heating the die tip apex portion indirectly with a heating element disposed adjacent to and spaced from the die tip apex portion.